

Five Charts: Gauging Gen X's Digital Device Usage and Attitudes Towards Advertising

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Straddling the analogue and digital divide, Gen Xers are readily reachable by marketers, but they can be picky about where and how they want to interact with ads.

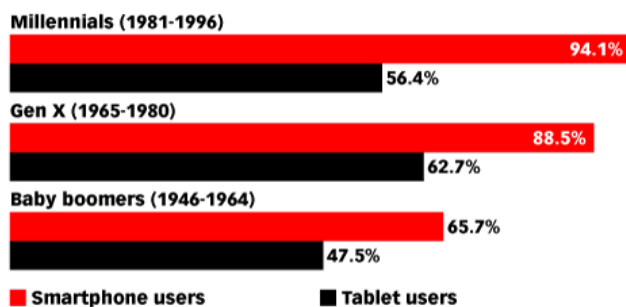
We spoke with demographics thought-leaders about this generation's device usage and their attitudes toward advertising. Here's what we learned:

Get 'Em on the Go

Smartphone ownership is the norm for Xers—we estimate that 88.5% of the Xer population, or 57.9 million people, own such a device. For marketers, knowing how to reach this cohort with timely and relevant communications is key.

US Smartphone and Tablet Users, by Generation, 2019

% of population in each group



Note: individuals who own at least one smartphone and use the smartphone(s) at least once per month or individuals who use a tablet at least once per month

Source: eMarketer, March 2019

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“They’re certainly using their smartphones a lot,” said Gillian MacPherson, vice president of digital product and strategy at [Epsilon](#). “Based purely on screen time and usage, Xers are being effectively targeted and influenced through their mobile devices. They are shopping more online than they are with other devices.”

Xers look to their phones for convenience and ease of use and are attuned to ads on these devices specifically while multitasking or on the go. According to a November 2018 survey from AI-advertising platform [Aki Technologies](#) conducted by sampling service [Lucid](#), Xer internet users ages 39 to 53 are most receptive to smartphone ads while watching TV (57%) or in bed before sleeping (51%), as is true of all other generations. However, Xers are specifically receptive of ads while shopping in-store (37%), exercising (39%) and running errands (39%).

When Are US Internet Users Most Receptive to Smartphone Ads?

% of respondents, by generation, Nov 2018

	Gen Z (18-23)	Millennial (22-38)	Gen X (39-53)	Baby boomer (54-74)	Total
While watching TV at home	55%	66%	57%	53%	59%
While in bed before sleeping	73%	63%	51%	40%	51%
While eating a meal	47%	36%	31%	31%	36%
While shopping in a store	25%	39%	37%	15%	25%
While exercising	22%	45%	39%	37%	24%
While running errands	12%	30%	39%	22%	21%

Source: Aki Technologies survey conducted by Lucid; eMarketer calculations, Jan 18, 2019

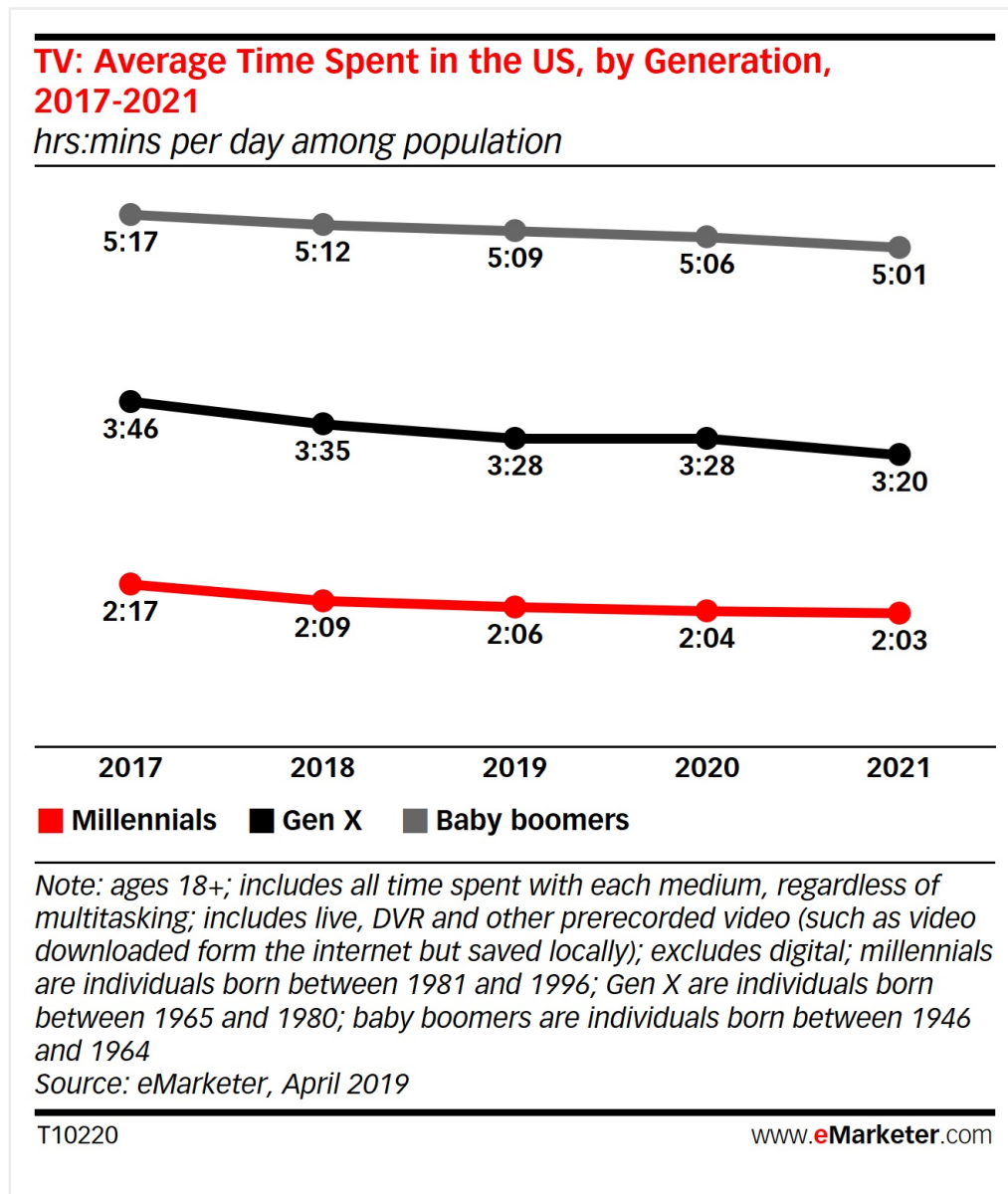
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"This is a hectic life stage for Xers," MacPherson said. "They have busy careers and a lot more of them have kids, so that convenience factor is huge."

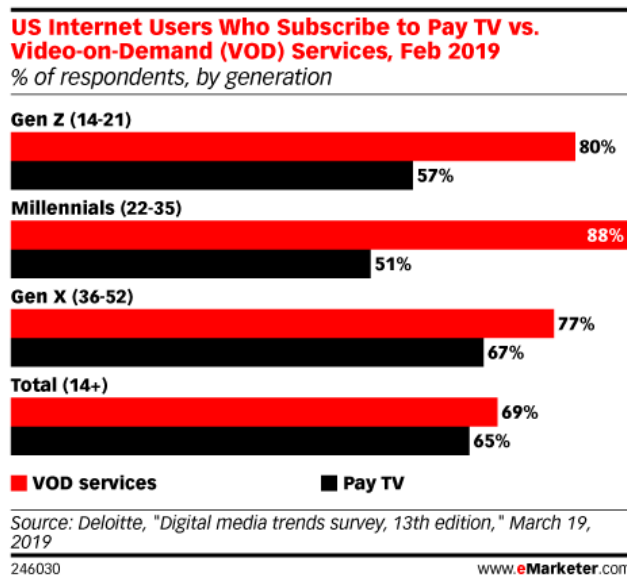
Don't Bother Them Too Much on TV

Xers still watch a lot of nondigital TV at 3 hours, 28 minutes per day, compared with millennials (slightly more than 2 hours according to our forecast figures). This usage volume means they're available to see marketers' advertising, but this generation can be particular about their ad experiences.



“They are frustrated with ad repetition,” said Jeff Loucks, executive director for technology, media and telecommunications at [Deloitte](#). “They feel like there are too many ads, and the ads are too long. [...] The desire to avoid these ads is driving a lot of streaming subscriptions, too.”

And subscribing they are. According to February 2019 survey from Deloitte, 77% of Xers ages 36 to 52 subscribe to video-on-demand services, up from 64% who said the same in 2017.



Alongside avoiding ads, Xers turn to streaming subscriptions for content control and exclusive access to shows and movies, per Deloitte.

They're Getting Smart About Speakers

Though not as quickly as digital natives, Xers are open to adopting new technology. This year, we estimate more than one-third of Xers (35%) will use smart speakers at least once per month as they evolve daily tasks from their phones to their speakers.

“They’re asking Alexa or Google for weather and traffic news,” Epsilon's MacPherson said. “They’re listening to music, setting reminders and asking about their calendars. They’re looking at the

simple things they once did on their devices to now executing these tasks verbally.”

Some Xers are going beyond these simple tasks to use their speakers for more involved activities. According to our June 2019 survey conducted by market research company [Bizrate Insights](#), smart speakers are most popular among Xers who own these devices for ordering entertainment (26%) as well as adding products to a shopping cart and purchasing on another device (21%). However, the majority of Xer respondents (57%) still said “none of the above” when asked how they use these devices.

Which Select Activities Have US Smart Speaker Owners Done on Their Smart Speakers?
% of respondents, by demographic, June 2019

	Gender		Age			Total
	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55-65	
Ordered movies, TV shows, music, etc.	19%	23%	20%	26%	16%	21%
Browsed products	14%	16%	17%	16%	13%	15%
Asked for product recommendations	18%	12%	18%	17%	9%	15%
Re-ordered products that you've bought before	17%	12%	15%	16%	12%	14%
Added products to shopping cart, then finished checkout on another device	15%	10%	11%	21%	4%	13%
Ordered groceries or household items	9%	6%	7%	11%	4%	8%
Ordered electronic devices	8%	5%	8%	9%	2%	7%
Added products to shopping cart, then bought on smart speaker	7%	6%	8%	6%	4%	6%
None of the above	64%	65%	62%	57%	77%	64%

Note: among respondents who own a smart speaker
Source: "The eMarketer Ecommerce Survey" conducted in June 2019 by Bizrate Insights, June 14, 2019

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“Xers are very open to interacting with media in new ways, whether that’s the smartphone, the smart speaker, streaming, etc.” Deloitte’s Loucks said. “They are eager for a better ad experience, and they want a better exchange of attention for content.”

For marketers, it’s crucial to meet this dichotomy of a generation where they are, and to come equipped with appropriate and timely messaging that mirrors their unique life stage.

For more information on the digital habits of Generation X, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our recent report:

Report by Mark Dolliver Jul 01, 2019

Gen X 2019

GEN X 2019

It's Still Stupid to Ignore Them

JULY 2019
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